

The Truth About the Salaries in Hollywood

Fabulous Sums Are
Not as Real as
Stars Would Like
Them to Be



Upper left Katherine MacDonald, declared by ex-President Wilson to be the most beautiful film star. She is often in Hollywood; Right: Richard Dix admiring a landscape painted by his mother; Upper Right: It is said that Jim, the bootblack, knows more about Hollywood than any other resident, but he does not talk; Left—Two Hollywood dog actors unbesmirched by scandal.



account of the swarm of others besides the leading actors who have to do with the studios. A few directors' salaries go as high as \$2,000 and \$3,000 a week, really good ones being rarer than really good actors. William Desmond Taylor, who was murdered, got \$1,250. He was regarded as an "uneven performer." Some of his pictures were masterpieces; others medi-

ocre. A director's salary is commonly around \$500 a week. Players of small parts, who may appear only once and then get killed off, are paid by the day, \$15 and up. The extra people get from \$5 to \$15 a day, the customary rate being \$7.50, and the "atmosphere" persons with no training, who add numbers or color to mob scenes—\$3 a day. The best camera men receive \$200 a week. Many of them float from studio to studio, but some of the directors and players insist on having the same one for each picture. Mary Pickford always calls for Charles Rosher, as he has proved that he best knows how to attain the effects she desires.

Do the actors save anything? Bankers of Hollywood told me that the number of those who do is larger than might be supposed. Charles Chaplin is credited with having the largest deposits. He has a cash balance of \$300,000 in one of the Hollywood banks. The returns from each of his pictures are credited to separate accounts. His financial man is his secretary. William S. Hart and Pauline Frederick are among the many others who make regular deposits and fewer withdrawals. The spendthrifts are like so many Coal Oil Johnnies. Without training in the use of money, without taste or imagination, they fling their dollars along the line of least resistance. They overdress, they give garish parties, they put special bodies on the most expensive automobiles (Arbuckle's \$25,000 chariot was inlaid with gold), they repair between pictures to the Tia Juana race track, just across the Mexican line, and go broke.

Hollywood Night Life

Quiet and Uninteresting
Eric von Stroheim has three automobiles, as has Priscilla Dean, who lives in the Hollywood foothills.

I promised to report on the night life of Hollywood. As indicated, the streets are pastorally quiet. The two big social mob scenes are the Tuesday night dance at the Ambassador, between Hollywood and Los Angeles, and the Thursday night dance at the Hollywood Hotel. The latter was rather jamboreesh at one time, but has been denatured. The Ambassador dance will be mentioned later. The real cutups go to such places as the Sunset Inn on the road to Santa Monica, miles from Hollywood. Two rather noted actresses played a game of strip poker there last summer, but at the next to the last moment an actor in policeman's uniform rushed in and arrested them. The Ship, an eating place in Venice, on the ocean, is also well patronized. No liquor is sold on the premises, it was solemnly assured, but in this bootlegger's paradise that need be no deterrent. Hollywood itself, in addition to a few restaurants, only one of which is open all night, has a few tearooms and that exhausts the list.

There is space only for a brief listing of some of Hollywood's many fine activities in which the screen workers share. In the Bowl, a natural amphitheater seating 5,500 persons, outdoor spectacles are staged,

and the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra will give forty concerts next summer with the admission fee only 25 cents. There is a community theater, organized and managed by Neely Dickson, where have been seen scores of one act plays written by such authors as Lord Dunsany, Bernard Shaw, Lady Gregory, William Butler Yeats, John Masefield, Sir James M. Barrie and Stephen Phillips. The best of the legitimate players drawn to the studios of Hollywood have taken part. Every night during the summer the Pilgrimage Play, based on the life of Christ, is given in a canyon in the foothills at prices ranging from 50 cents to \$2. The spirit of the town is suggested by the fact that the Board of Supervisors appropriated \$20,000 a year for three years for the support of this undertaking. Many beds in Los Angeles hospitals are maintained by movie persons.

Up in the hills Mrs. Annie Besant presides over the Krotona Institute of Theosophy. Some of the churches of Hollywood, notably the Christian Science, Unitarian and Methodist, are particularly attractive. The roll of Christian Science members is a movie who's who. Witness: Bob Ellis and his wife, May Allison; Mr. and Mrs. Tully Marshall, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Hatton, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Graves, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ogle, Paul Scardon and his wife, Betty Blythe; Mr. and Mrs. Jack Holt; Richard Dix, Miss Leatrice Joy, Miss Helen Ferguson, Miss Helen Jerome Eddy, Miss Lillian Leighton, Miss Shannon Day, Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Nagel, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Franklin and Mr. and Mrs. King Vidor. All the children of C. B. and W. C. De Mille attend the Christian Science Sunday School.

Then there is the Screen Writers Guild. It is a distinctly cheering institution. Before going to Hollywood I had never heard of it except through a newspaper announcement that it had offered a reward of \$1,000 for the capture and conviction of the Taylor murderer.

"That's the crowd that gave the big dinner a while ago, the Writers Cramp," an outlander told me. So it is, and much more. It is a flourishing alliance of the men and women of a new profession—the writers of stories and scenarios for the motion pictures. It is an offspring of the Authors League of America, born two years ago at a meeting in the home of Thompson Buchanan, whom theatergoers remember for "A Woman's Way" and other plays of the legitimate stage.

It strives to get adequate recognition for the screen writer, to cooperate with the Authors League in improving copyright laws, to make sounder the contracts of writers and producers and to ply visiting celebrities with food and moral entertainment. It has in Hollywood a \$30,000 clubhouse, for which it is paying by the month, without missing an installment thus far. It dispelled forever the impression that writers are poor business men by making a profit of \$6,647.54 from its first annual dinner, the Writers Cramp, held in December in the Ambassador Hotel.

It has succeeded in settling out of court disputes between producers and writers, so that now its services as arbiter is sought even by the "magnates." And when the scandals threatened Hollywood the Screen Writers Guild leaped to the defense.

So far as I know the association of mo-

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IN the old days it was the habit of some producers and their press agents to exaggerate for publication the salaries of their stars, but the chastening of Hollywood has brought about a realization that this was a silly business—bad for the star, bad for his associates, bad for the whole industry.

How much do the picture players get? In many instances it is impossible to learn the real figures. They are a secret between the star and the one or two individuals with whom the contract was made. This secrecy has enabled the imaginative actor and publicity man to soar as high as they pleased without challenge. Also the methods of payment are so diverse as to make estimation of amounts difficult. Some players have a weekly drawing account and a percentage of the profits. Some get a flat weekly salary under yearly or long term contract. Some are paid by the week for the period required for the making of the picture; when the picture is finished the salary stops. Some of the biggest stars produce their own pictures and take all the profit or loss, as the case may be. Of these some finance their own productions and others are financed by the corporations which distribute the films.

One thing is certain and that is within the last year there has been a marked lowering of salaries throughout the motion picture ranks, amounting in some instances to more than 50 per cent. A sage of Hollywood thus summarized the present salary situation:

"This is an El Dorado for a few, a grub stake for many and a Dead Man's Gulch for many others. I know well known actors and actresses whose salaries appear to be fabulous but who would be better off if they had steady jobs at \$100 a week. One of these is a leading woman who gets \$500 a week. That sounds like \$25,000 a year. The fact is that the moment a picture is finished she gets nothing, and sometimes she is idle for months between pictures. I know a star who has a Packard car but no money to buy gasoline. A leading woman with a male star got \$200 a week for four weeks and then nothing for four months. Sometimes a player of a striking type is catapulted into prominence by one picture, but then she can't find another picture suitable to her peculiar personality and she is out of a job for five months."

Mary Pickford Highest Paid Hollywood Player

The highest paid players on continuous weekly salary were Mary Pickford, Charley Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks, all of whom are now producing on their own account. William S. Hart, whose salary was \$2,000 a week, has also become a producer. A famous opera singer made three pictures and received \$50,000 for each of them. The highest paid salaried actor in Hollywood at the present time, according to information given me, is Mary Miles Minter. I was told that her contract with Famous Players-Lasky calls for five pictures at the graded rate of \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 and \$70,000 a picture. She has made her last production, so that roughly she has earned \$250,000 a year. Another top salaried celebrity is Pauline Frederick. She had a contract at \$7,500 a week, but I was told that when retrenchment set in she acquiesced in a reduction to \$3,000 a week. Betty Compson, on a five year contract at \$2,000 a week, also accepted a reduction. I also heard that Wallace Reid had been reduced from \$1,750 to \$1,250 a week, but this, in view of the fact that he is now one of the greatest drawing cards at the film theaters, seems improbable.

Rodolph Valentino, who has recently found great demand for his services, has

just signed a contract with Famous Players-Lasky at \$1,000 a week for the first year, \$2,000 for the second and \$3,000 for the third. Harold Lloyd gets a lump sum for each picture and percentage of the profits over a certain sum. His personal fortune is estimated at \$350,000.

The public has an impression that Charley Chaplin is under contract at "a million a year." The fact is that the distributor, First National Pictures, agreed to pay him \$1,000,000 for eight pictures, and it has taken him five years to make them. This makes his average return only \$125,000 a picture and \$200,000 a year. Out of this Chaplin pays the cost of production, averaging about \$60,000 a picture. At this rate his net return per picture is \$65,000, with income tax to be deducted. I suppose he also has a percentage interest in the distributor's profits, which would swell the sum considerably, but even so Hollywood knows that Chaplin's fortune is not what it is generally thought to be. He takes his time in turning out one of his comedies. He is tired of slapstick and meringue pies and doesn't care who knows it, and stays away from his studio as much as possible while the expense mounts up just the same. The dog that he used in filming "A Dog's Life" grew from puppyhood to maturity before the picture was done. Toward the end they had to fake—that is, to place the camera further away in order to make the dog appear to be the same size as when the production was started.

What Mary Pickford makes is a secret among herself, her mother, who is her business manager, and the income tax bureau. It does not amount to \$1,000,000 a year. Friends in Hollywood believe that recently she and her husband have each been netting about \$500,000. After fifteen years on the legitimate and movie stage Miss Pickford is worth about \$3,000,000. She is a wise investor. Fairbanks is not a great saver, or has not been up to this time. He spends enormous sums on his productions. "The Three Musketeers" cost not far from \$750,000.

Conrad Nagel, one of the newer leading men of considerable experience on the legitimate stage, has a salary of \$750 a week. This is above the leading man's

average, the reason being that Nagel not only can act but looks like an aristocrat. Katherine MacDonald has her own company and gets \$50,000 a picture from First National. Mabel Normand got at one time \$4,000 a week. I don't know what her present contract with Mack Sennett calls for. Here are some actual figures that were given me under pledge that the names would not be used:

A well known star, a homely man who does homely, heart interest stories but is not just now in the pictures, had a two year contract at \$2,000 a week. A well known character man, in constant demand, works by the picture at \$2,000 and \$3,000 a week. A leading woman who is popular with the public receives \$400 a week, but misses a good many weeks between pictures. A noted character actor ranked as a star is paid \$1,500 or \$2,000 a week. A featured leading woman under a five year contract gets \$450 a week the year around. A man who has been before the camera only a year but has a thorough stage training is under contract at \$500 a week. A juvenile lead gets \$250 a week, with provision for an annual increase. A seventeen-year-old ingenue, one year in the pictures, draws \$150 a week. A character woman in steady demand for "grand dame" parts gets \$100 a week on a long term contract; character man playing small parts \$75.

Stock Players' Salaries

Generally Below \$500

The salaries of stock players under contract range as a rule from \$125 to \$500 a week. It takes an exceptional man or woman to rise above \$500. Fancy salaries are often paid to outsiders engaged to play leads with the regular stock companies. Salaries also vary with the prosperity of the producer and sometimes depend on his personal whim. The present tendency is away from the fancy salary and toward standardization. The day of the \$5,000 a week star is passing. The players are also being held to stricter studio discipline. Contracts are being drawn so as to compel the player to give undivided attention to work and to discourage costly vacillations due to temperament or big head.

In writing of salaries I have not taken